

AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION WORK GROUP

MEETING MINUTES

September 19, 2007

1. Attendance: Tom Dernoga, Marilynn Bland, Boyd Campbell, William Moore, Laura Moore*, Stephanie DeVile-Eugene, Torben Agesen

**Chair Dernoga introduced a new Work Group member, Ms. Laura Moore, a resident of Greenbelt (Developed Tier representative). Ms. Moore replaces Mr. Michael Martin who has moved out of the County.*

2. Meeting Agenda:

Approval of Minutes (August 22)

Minutes were approved.

II. MALPF Easements

Yates Clagett provided an overview of two resolutions (CR-62-2007 and CR-63-2007) being considered by the County Council and County Executive for the formation of agricultural districts pursuant to the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) Program. The two properties are described as follows:

- 1) Approximately 52.581 acres of land (Map 158/Grid F2/Parcel 6/Tax Account 04- 0256107) located at 15200 River Airport Road in the Brandywine area (CR-62-2007)
- 2) Approximately 57.4277 acres of land (Map 56/Grid B3/Parcel 25/Tax Account 07-0771790) located at 17710 Mill Branch Place in the Mitchellville area (CR-63-2007)

Boyd Campbell raised a concern regarding the property description contained in CR-62-2007 because Croom Airport Road is not listed as a road on PG Atlas. Mr. Clagett and Margaret Addis (Office of Law) confirmed that the description is accurate and that the map, grid, parcel

and tax account is actually what is used for the legal description for purposes of the easements.

State Legislation

Chair Dernoga summarized proposed language for two pieces of State legislation which has been submitted to Senator Miller to meet the pre-filed bills deadline.

1) Agricultural Preservation Easement Program – addresses current issues with spending money on agriculture as well as outside of the Metropolitan District

2) Property Tax Relief for Agricultural Property Under Preservation Programs – provides property tax credit for agricultural land, including any farm improvements, that is subject to the State's or county's agricultural land preservation program

Yates Clagett commented that currently there are approximately 250 acres of land in the County that are eligible for the property tax credit. Potentially, there are 4,500 acres that could become eligible. Boyd Campbell inquired about the fiscal implication of the credit, and Chair Dernoga responded that the General Assembly will generate a fiscal note during review of the legislation.

Stephanie DeVille-Eugene inquired about the eligibility of small property owners who participate in tree conservation easement programs and if they are also considered "land preservation programs" as is described in the proposed property tax relief legislation. Ms. Eugene explained that larger landowners may benefit from the credit through the Rural Legacy or MALPF programs, but the concern remains among smaller property owners that they are not receiving any benefits from the various programs that are available due to the size of their properties.

In response to Ms. Eugene's question, Margaret Addis responded that in order to receive a reduced tax rate, a Forest Management Plan with a no cut provision is required and no credit is applied for woodland conservation easements. With regard to the legislation for property tax

relief, Ms. Addis indicated that the draft was written to be broad so that it could include any programs recommended by the Work Group.

Drafting of the Final Report to the County Council

Chair Dernoga commented on a discussion in a previous meeting concerning a charrette and the timing of public input prior to preparation of the final report. Council Member Bland suggested that the Work Group could issue a report, seek feedback from the public and, if necessary, request permission from the County Council to reconvene to address comments from the public.

Boyd Campbell suggested that since the Work Group has done its job, it could sunset after issuing a report, and include a recommendation for a charrette. Mr. Campbell also commented that a minimum of two meetings should be devoted to discussing the draft report.

The Work Group discussed an Agricultural Advisory Committee which was originally appointed during the administration of County Executive Glendening, but the committee is no longer active. Ms. Eugene suggested that this committee or a similar committee should become active because it is important that the property owners have a direct connection and feel as though they are represented on a committee by persons who are accountable to residents in their Districts. Ms. Eugene reiterated that it may not be tree conservation, but there needs to be some type of program that will benefit small property owners in terms of tax credits or other incentives for participation.

It was suggested that the final report might include a two tier list for recommendations based on property size. Harry Ketts was present in the audience and suggested that the report could include findings/conclusions, visions, and a plan of action.

Ms. Eugene informed the Work Group that the paperwork and underwriting process through Colonial Farm Credit is a little more extensive than that which was indicated during a previous meeting.

- 4. Next Meetings:** October 3, 2007 at 3:00 p.m.
October 17, 2007 at 3:00 p.m.

5. Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.